

INFLUENCING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

PJ's coach arrived at the oval at 3.55pm. Most of the boys were already kicking the football around but there were a few stragglers still arriving.

The coach ran onto the field, greeting the boys by name. He noticed that PJ was sitting on the sideline with his dad Gus and sister Ruby. "Come on PJ, time to get moving," he said, tapping his watch.

"Right fellas, I want two laps round the oval to start," coach said. The boys ran off slowly. "Come on fellas, pick up the pace."

It wasn't long before they returned. Coach put the boys in two groups and they began passing and kicking drills. A few of the boys fumbled and dropped their catches, while others kicked short or wide of the targets.

"Come on boys, what's wrong with you today, anyone would think you're a bunch of girls, get into it!" he yelled. "Another five laps round the oval."

Annoyed with the boys, he walked over to talk with Gus. "I don't know what's wrong with those boys today," he said. Turning to Ruby he said, "even Ruby could do a better job than these fellas today."

Ruby looked away from the coach and stared towards the ground. Coach could see she was upset, he realised the way he had been talking about girls to the boys was hurtful and disrespectful. He should have known better.

"You alright Ruby? You know I didn't mean anything by the comments on the field. Just got to get those boys moving today." "Know what I mean Gus?"

"Yeah, yeah, they're slow today for sure," Gus said. "Look, we might get going eh? Tell PJ to come straight home after training."

Coach nodded. "Sure Gus, no problems." He turned his attention back to the boys who were about halfway through their laps, reflecting on Ruby's reaction.

"Look boys, what I said might not have been the best thing to say."

One of boys stepped forward. "I dunno coach. We were pretty ordinary today."

"Let's take five fellas. I want to talk to you about this; it's important. I made a mistake today when I said you were like a bunch of girls. Remember how we talk about learning from our mistakes on the field...well it's the same thing here. The way I referred to girls was disrespectful."

PJ put his hand up. "Aww come on coach, it wasn't that bad."

"Hang on PJ. If one of your friends was being disrespectful to you, how would you feel? What would you do?"

PJ turned to the other boys to see how they were reacting. He



didn't want to say something that might make him look bad. "I dunno coach. I'd have to think about that."

"Well I want you all to think about it, and we'll have a talk about this next week. That's it for today."

The boys nodded. Some moved off and others stayed on, practicing their goal kicking. Coach hurried off, thinking about the lessons he had to plan for training the next day and about what he would say to the boys next week. As he was about to get into his car, he noticed Gus approaching.

"Coach, have you got a minute?"

"Sure. Actually I'm glad we caught up. I wanted to apologise for talking down girls in front of the kids."

Gus leant against the car. "It's OK coach, I guess we're all guilty of it ... but yeah, we shouldn't be saying disrespectful things about women to our kids. If we do they might grow up thinking that disrespect's normal."

Coach nodded thoughtfully. "You're right, as adults, we've got a lot of influence and we need to think about what we say in front of our kids."

"Maybe we need to get a few of the men together and talk about this some more," Gus said. "What do you think?"

"If I can help in any way, let me know. In the meantime, I'll talk with the boys about the comments I was making, talk to them about why that type of language isn't OK. Let's make sure we lead the way for our boys to learn the right way to behave, and then we can stop disrespect towards women at the start."

"And that will help make our communities strong," Gus said.

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The above story is a fictionalised account of a coach reflecting on his own attitudes and behaviour and realising his role as an influencer. This story accompanies the Storybook Respect Starts With Us and other resources that have been produced for the Australian Government's national campaign to reduce violence against women and their children. The campaign aims to help break the cycle of violence by encouraging adults to reflect on their attitudes, and have conversations about respect with young people.

Resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been produced as part of the national campaign, including a conversation guide to help parents talk with their children about respect. For more information about the campaign, resources and tools, visit <https://www.respect.gov.au/campaign/atsi-materials/>